

Cultural Contagion from Micro to Macro: A Semiotics Approach

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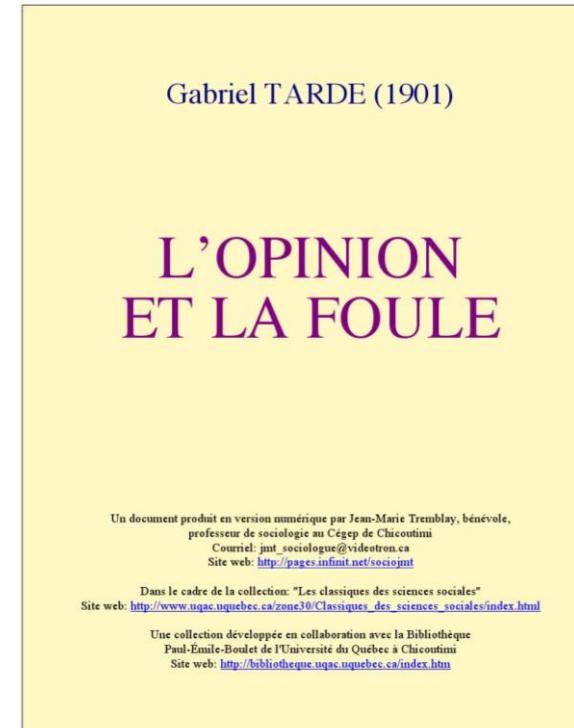
IASS2017, Kaunas, 26-30 June 2017



10th Franco-Korean Seminar: “From the Contagion of Ideas to the Diffusion of Cultures”



Triviality: the “circulation of cultural beings”



- Pragmatics
- Rhetoric
- Hermeneutics

Culture as a phenomenon: simultaneously micro- and macro-

“Culture is both structure and something dynamic, which is what makes it so hard to observe and analyse. As structure, it includes stable elements which can give the impression that it has an essence, whereas in fact this stability results first and foremost from the fact that historically things change over long periods. As a dynamic process, it is indeed subject to historical change.”

(Desjeux, D. (2002). Les échelles d'observation de la culture.
Communication et organisation, (22), p. 2, my translation).

Structuration Theory

« Le structurel doit toujours être conçu comme une propriété des systèmes sociaux ancrée dans les pratiques reproduites et enchâssées dans le temps et l'espace, et portée par elles ».

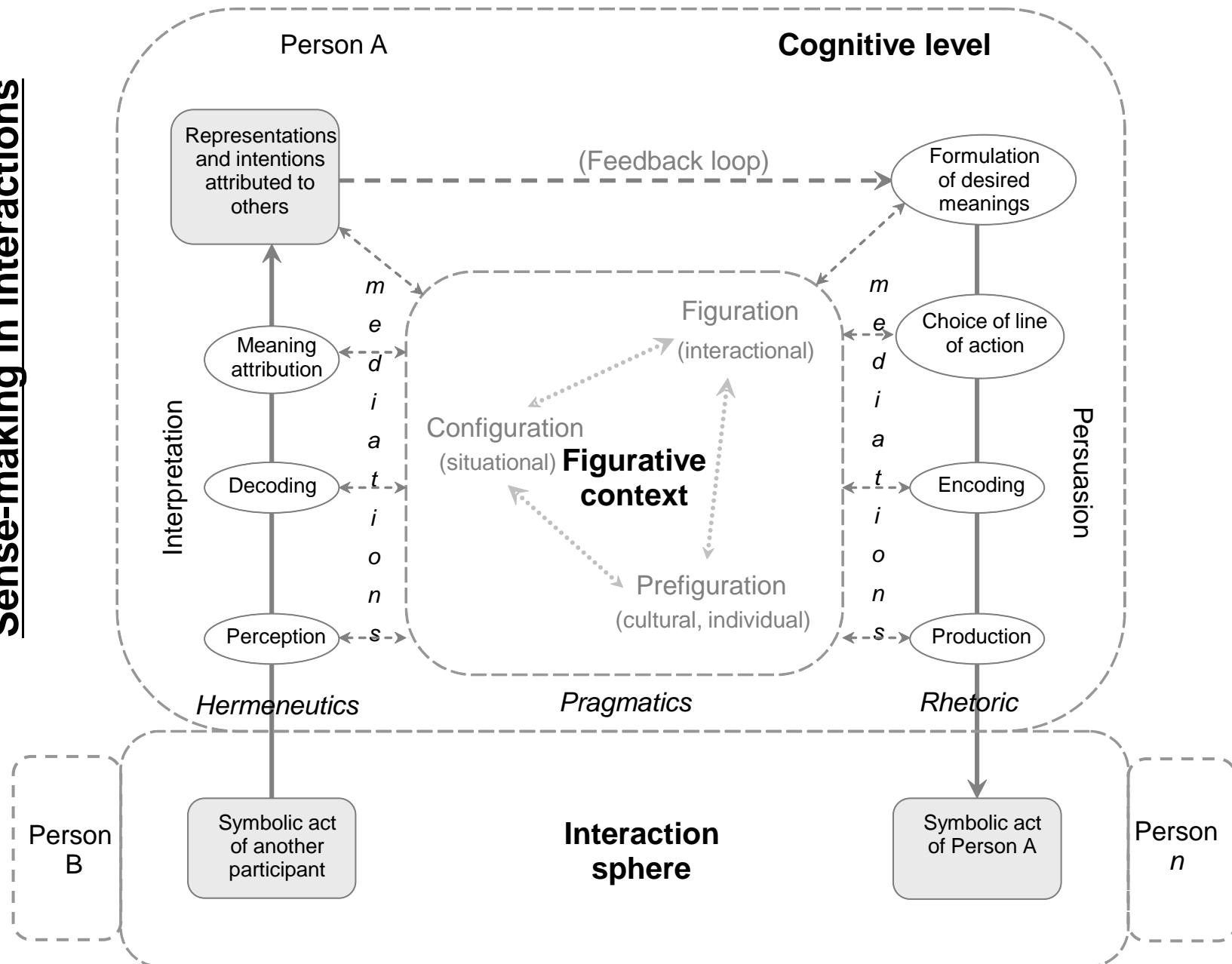
(Giddens, Anthony. *La constitution de la société: Eléments de la théorie de la structuration*. Sociologies. Paris: PUF, 1987, p. 227)

Culture as Praxis...

“...is as much about inventing as it is about preserving; about discontinuity as much as about continuation; about novelty as much as about tradition; about routine as much as about pattern breaking; about norm-following as much as about the transcendence of norm; about the unique as much as about the regular; about change as much as about monotony of reproduction; about the unexpected as much as about the predictable”.

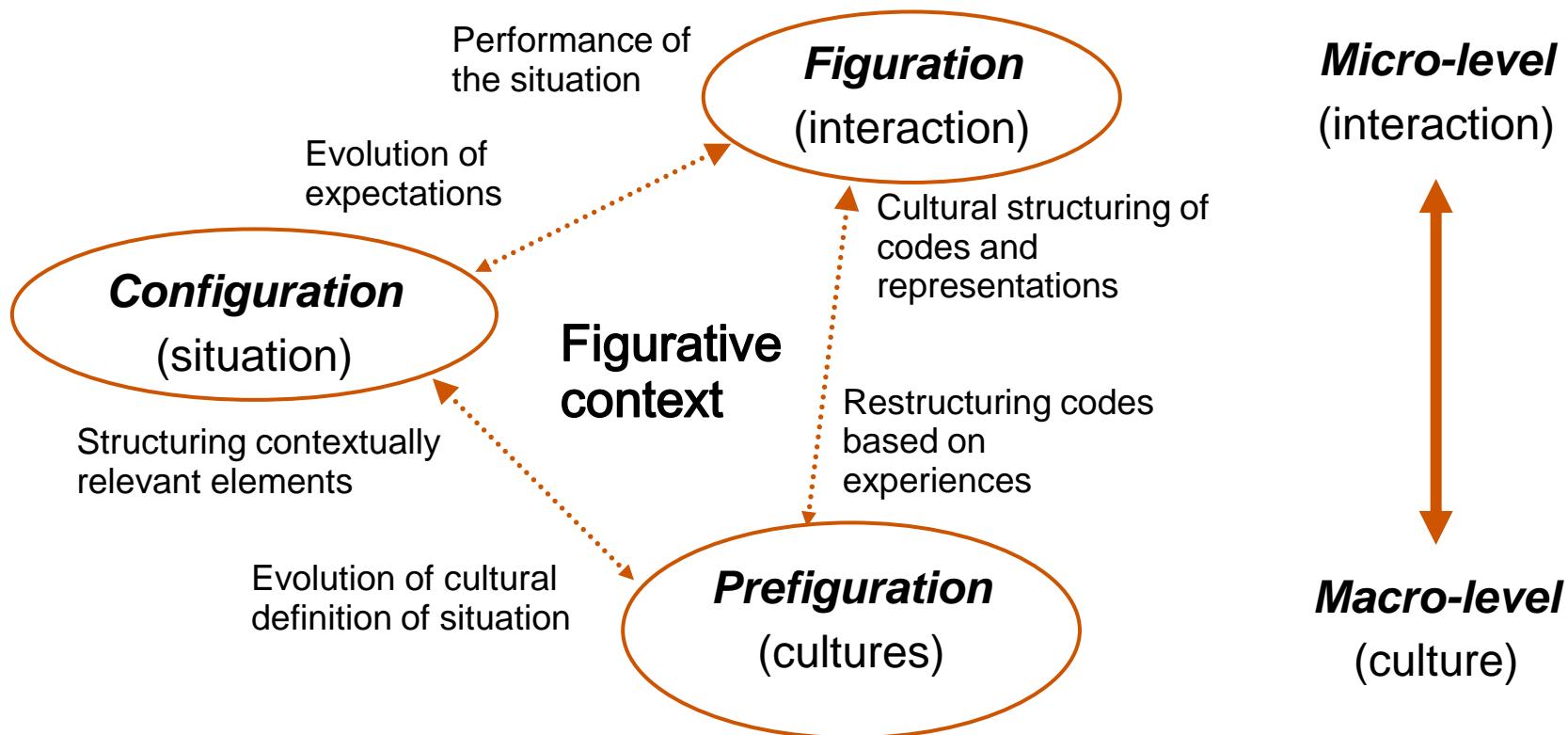
(Bauman, Z. (1999). Culture as Praxis. London: Sage, p. xiv).

Sense-making in interactions



Frame, A. (2008). Repenser l'interculturel en communication : Performance culturelle et construction des identités au sein d'une association européenne. Université de Bourgogne, PhD thesis.

Relations between Micro and Macro: the Semiopragmatics Approach



Studying Organisational Culture: The case of AEGEE

Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe
(The European Student Forum)



Data for 2005:

- Pro-European student association
- Founded in 1985
- Present in 40 'European' countries
- 15 000 members
- 241 antennae

« To sign » or « to sing » ?

« Convention d'adhésion,
on la signe, on la signe

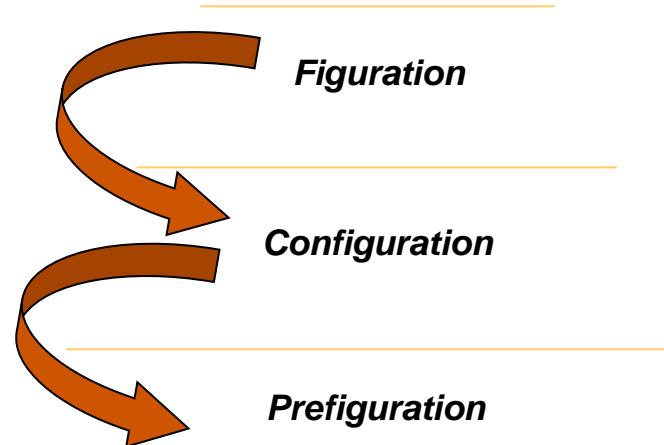
Convention d'adhésion, on
la signe tous ensemble »



« Mistake »
in the
programme

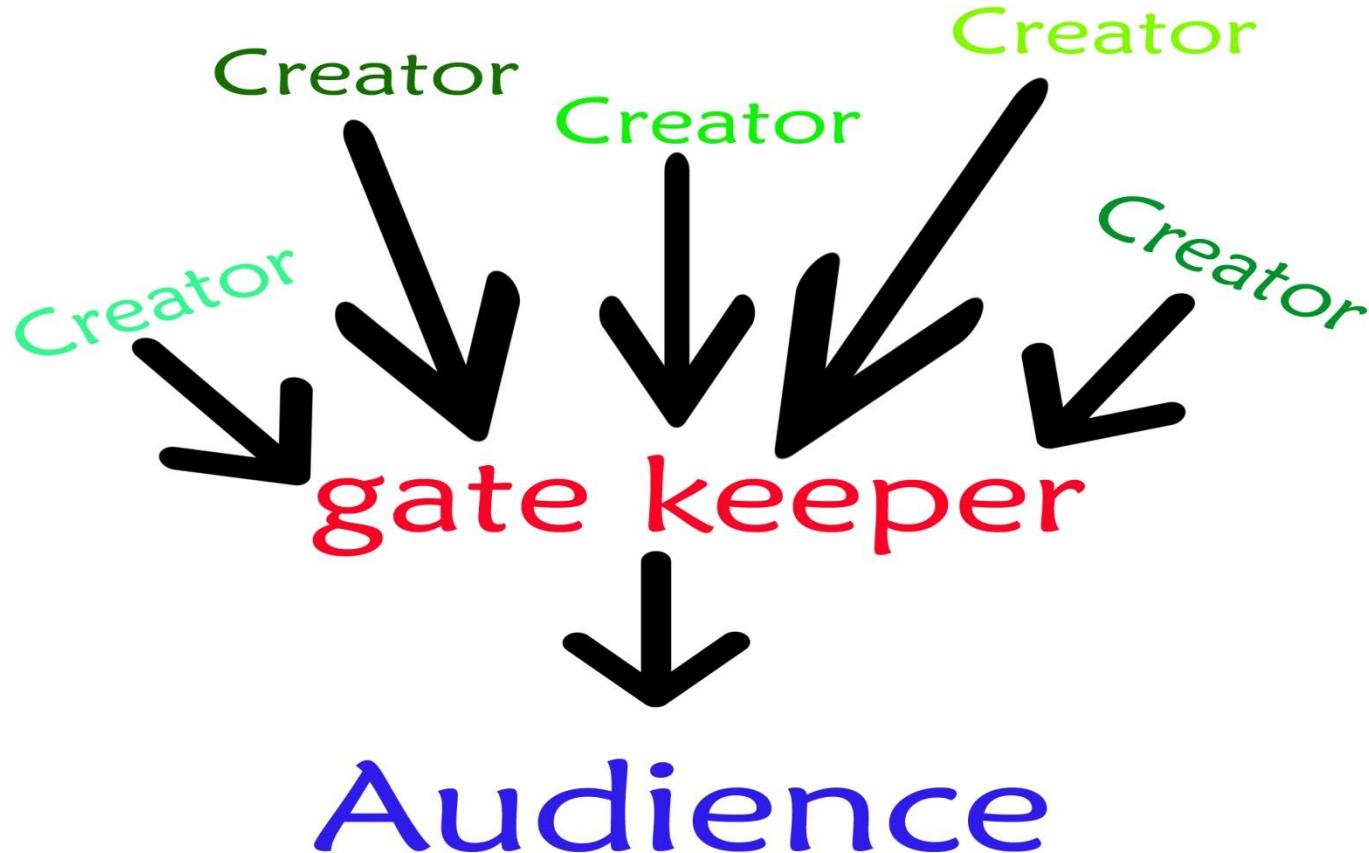
Repetition of
the « mistake »

New cultural
practice adopted



Micro-
↑
Meso-
↑
Macro-

Media as cultural catalysts: model of the gatekeeper



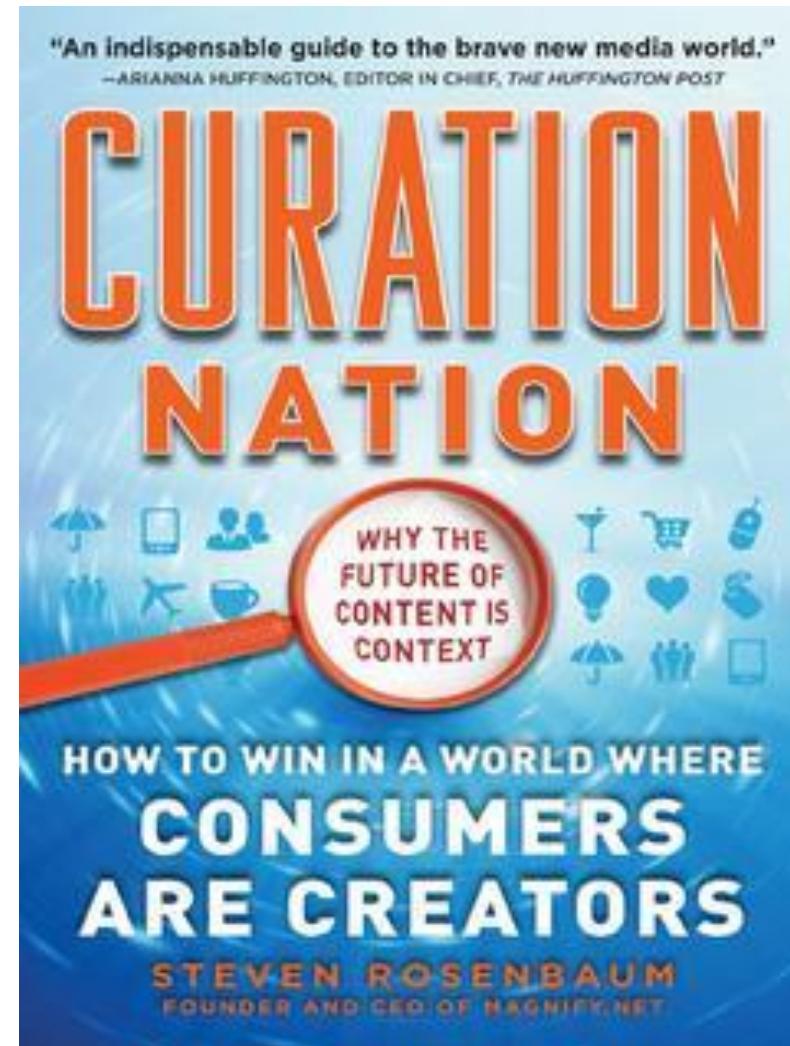
From gatekeeper to curator

Algorithms

Personal
recommendations

Audience
fragmentation

Technical and social
confinement



New possibilities for contagion: scapes



Arjun Appadurai (1996):
Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization

financescapes,
ethnoscapes,
mediascapes,
technoscapes
ideoscapes

Internet memes



“Nyan Cat is the name of a YouTube video, uploaded in April 2011, which became an Internet meme. The video merged a Japanese pop song with an animated cartoon cat with a Pop-Tart for a body, flying through space, and leaving a rainbow trail behind it. The video ranked at number 5 on the list of most viewed YouTube videos in 2011.”

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nyan_Cat)

Internet memes

Mashable

Down for maintenance

We're giving the hamsters their annual physical. They'll be back on their wheels shortly.

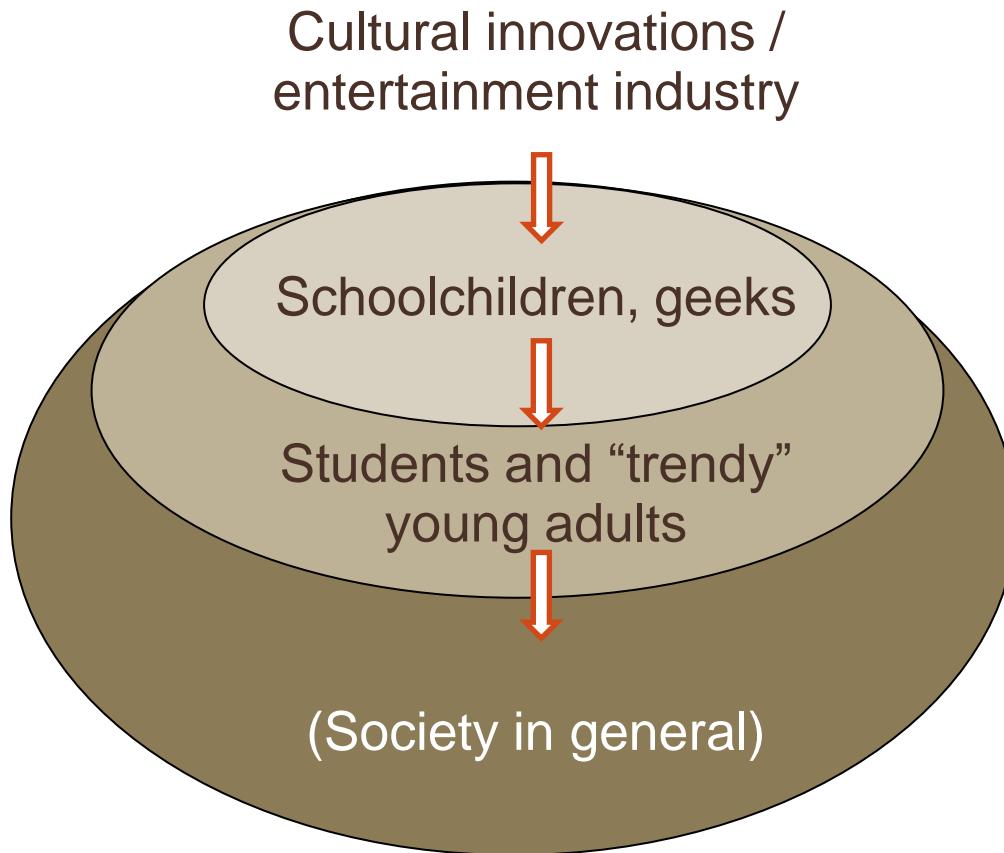
In the meantime, enjoy this video. We'll be back before you finish it.



Number of Youtube views

Date	Nombre de visualisations
mai 2011	12 millions
juin 2011	20 millions
juillet 2011	45 millions
décembre 2011	50 millions
février 2012	60 millions
5 avril 2012 (1er anniversaire)	70 millions
début juin 2012	75 millions
septembre 2012	85 millions
novembre 2012	88 millions
décembre 2012	90 millions
mars 2013	97 millions
juillet 2013	102 millions
novembre 2013	103 millions

Social propagation of cultural innovations



Pierre Bourdieu: The social mechanism of distinction



Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La Distinction : Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

K-Pop



Viral culture vs contagion theory



“Viral” spread of cultural traits

Viral culture vs contagion theory



“Viral” spread of cultural traits

Not affective crowd reaction

Viral culture vs contagion theory

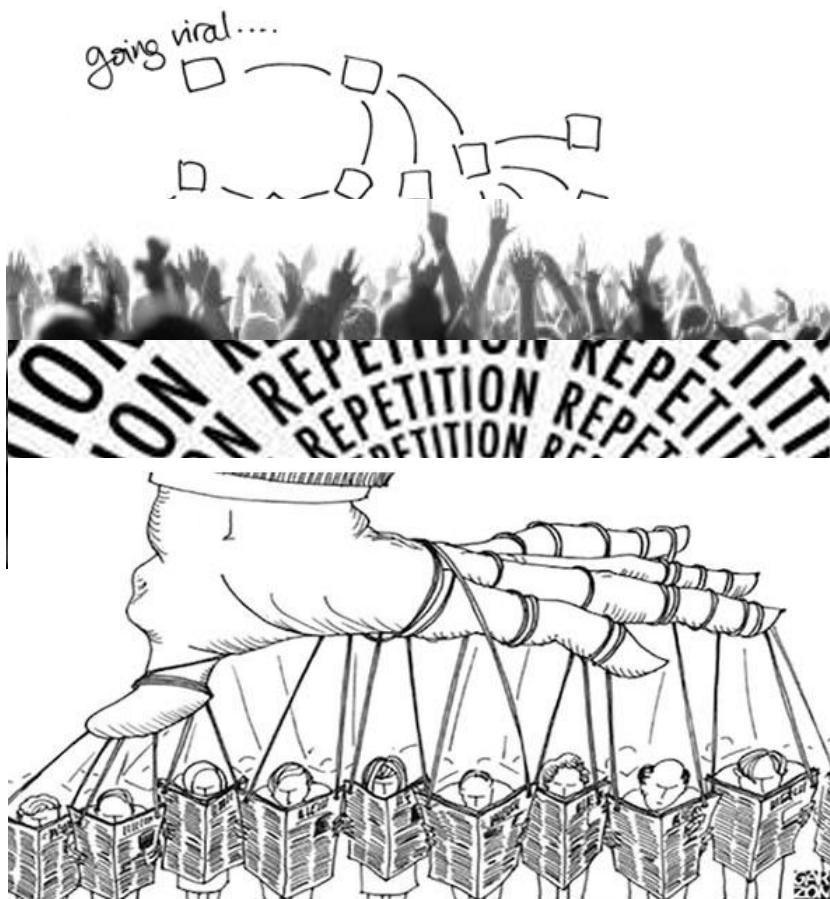


“Viral” spread of cultural traits

Not affective crowd reaction

Need for repeated mediation

Viral culture vs contagion theory



“Viral” spread of cultural traits

Not affective crowd reaction

Need for repeated mediation

Massification through media

Viral culture vs contagion theory



“Viral” spread of cultural traits

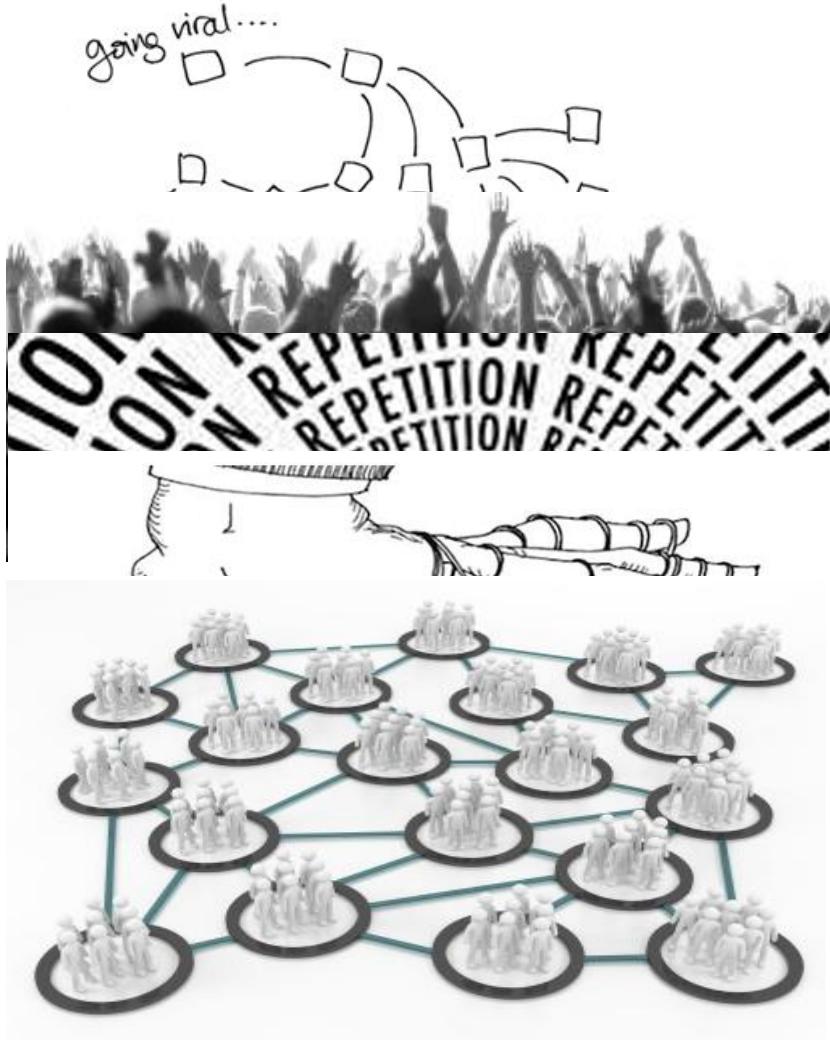
Not affective crowd reaction

Need for repeated mediation

Massification through media

Favourable terrain
(cultural, technical, social)

Viral culture vs contagion theory



“Viral” spread of cultural traits

Not affective crowd reaction

Need for repeated mediation

Massification through media

Favourable terrain
(cultural, technical, social)

Intergroup dynamics (adoption,
rejection, maintaining, abandoning)

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